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SENSITIVE

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

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SUBJECT: Committee to Monitor Investigations into Abductions and Disappearances

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On November 17, Ambassador met with Deputy Minister P. Radhakrishnan, a member of parliament who also serves as the Deputy Minister of Vocational and Technical Training and as the Convener of the Committee to Monitor Investigations into Abductions and Disappearances. Although Post was aware of this committee previously, local observers had not considered it an active player in actual human rights cases. When asked about his role in this, however, Radhakrishnan seemed eager to discuss the committee and its successes and presented Ambassador with copies of reports it had compiled on disappearances since the beginning of 2008. These reports appear to track individual cases brought to the committee, with some limited details on the person and the events surrounding the disappearance. The status of the case is then listed, whether the person returned or was located, was found in police custody, was still missing, or was confirmed dead. While not at all comprehensive due to the voluntary nature of reporting done to this committee, it nonetheless exists as a mechanism, arguably underutilized, to press for greater accountability within Sri Lanka. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) In the November 17 meeting, Ambassador asked about the committee, how it came about, and what its work entailed. Radhakrishnan replied that he and several colleagues had gone to the president in 2006 to ask about the alarming level of disappearances in the country. The president created this committee in response and asked Radhakrishnan to be a part of it. Radhakrishnan said the committee handled cases brought to it, usually by relatives of the missing person. The committee encouraged them also to file a report with the local police, ICRC, and other groups monitoring disappearances. Once per month the committee met with representatives from the security forces to check on cases. Radhakrishnan said they had seen success in some cases, finding the missing persons in custody of the CID or TID, sometimes at Boosa Prison in the South.

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador received copies of two reports the committee had compiled. The first covered incidents reported to the committee during 2008, although a handful of the reported incidents occurred prior to 2008. This report gave information on 285 disappearance cases. Of that total, 80 persons returned to their homes, 22 persons were found to be in Boosa and/or TID detention, 4 were

confirmed dead, and 179 were still missing, although it was unclear whether these status remarks were as of the end of 2008 or more recently. The other report covered cases filed from the beginning of 2009 up to November 16, a total of 115 disappearances reported. Of that total, 21 had returned to their homes, 5 were found at Boosa prison or in TID custody, 2 were confirmed dead, and 87 were still missing.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: Clearly these reports do not account for all disappearances occurring island-wide since the beginning of 2008. It is also not certain whether there is any overlap in cases this committee is monitoring as opposed to cases investigated by other committees within the government. The reports given to the Ambassador did not go into detail about the status of these cases. For those listed as killed for example, no information was given about whether any investigation was undertaken. This may simply be reflective of the specific report Ambassador received, however, and the committee may have looked into these details. What can be said, however, is that this committee attempts to address the problem of lack of accountability within the security forces system, and also attempts to shed some light on the problem of disappearances in Sri Lanka. Post will endeavor to see what other information the committee collects, and whether the results of the reports are then used by any government or non-government persons or entities to press for greater accountability. Although he was obviously aware the report did not include all disappearances that had taken place, Radhakrishnan said he was certain the overall number of disappearances in the country had dropped significantly since the end of the war. End Comment.

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